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Duplex Regnum Christi

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Defensible Propositions

belonging to the dissertation

Duplex Regnum Christi: *Christ's Twofold Kingdom in Reformed Theology*

Jonathon Beeke

1. The doctrine of the “two kingdoms” as it finds expression in the Reformed tradition is more aptly labelled the doctrine of Christ’s “twofold kingdom” (*duplex regnum Christi*). Contrary to today’s customary terminology that assumes a plurality of kingdoms, Reformed theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries spoke of a *singular* kingdom of Christ, albeit with a twofold distinction.
2. When comparing and contrasting the thought of the early Reformed and Reformed orthodox on the royal rule of Jesus Christ, elements of *continuity* are apparent especially when it is determined that for both a twofold aspect to Christ’s reign is operative *only* in a postlapsarian context. In other words, for both the early Reformed and Reformed orthodox, the presence of human sin and the subsequent promise of Christ’s mediation are the two necessary factors that give rise to his twofold kingdom.
3. When comparing and contrasting the thought of the early Reformed and Reformed orthodox on the royal rule of Jesus Christ, elements of *discontinuity* are evident especially in three areas: (1) the differing placement of consideration in the systematic treatments (i.e., under Christology rather than ecclesiology or discussions of the magistrate) of the Reformed orthodox, (2) an evolving variety of technical terms and definitions, and (3) closer alignment with covenantal/federal theology.

4. The three primary factors that motivated the Reformed orthodox refinement of the *duplex regnum Christi* were polemical, exegetical, and doctrinal concerns.
5. As evident from the differing socio-political contexts of Leiden, Geneva, and Edinburgh, the seventeenth-century refinement of the *duplex regnum Christi* doctrine was not principally due to political factors.
6. The broad consensus amongst the Reformed orthodox was to distinguish Christ's twofold kingdom according to the *mode* of his rule (i.e., whether essentially as God or whether mediatorially as God-man) rather than the *scope* of his rule.
7. The majority of Reformed orthodox theologians considered Christ's twofold kingdom to be universal in nature; while they believed the focus of Christ's essential kingdom is generally over creation, and the focus of his mediatorial kingdom is particularly Christ's church, it is not the case that the scope of the former was general whereas the scope of the latter was limited.
8. Contemporary R2K advocates and opponents alike have largely focused on the early Reformed presentation of Christ's kingdom (assuming as standard the early sixteenth-century terms and definitions), and have for the most part overlooked the more nuanced terms and definitions of the seventeenth-century Reformed orthodox.¹

¹ For those advocating a Reformed two-kingdoms theology, see for example, VanDrunen, *Natural Law and the Two Kingdoms*; VanDrunen, *Living in God's Two Kingdoms*; VanDrunen, "The Context of Natural Law: John Calvin's Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," 503–525; VanDrunen, "The Two Kingdoms: A Reassessment of the Transformationist Calvin," 248–266; Tuininga, *Calvin's Political Theology and the Public Engagement of the Church*. For those opposed to a Reformed two-kingdoms theology, but still employing similar terminology, see for example, Ouweneel, *The World is Christ's*; John Frame, *The Escondido Theology: A Reformed Response to Two Kingdom Theology*; Jason Lief, "Is Neo-

9. The age-old philosophical problem of “the one and the many” can be otherwise stated as follows: All people can be *lumped* into one of two categories: (1) “lumpers” or (2) “splitters.” Lumpers focus on the one or the universal, forcing the particulars to fit within the universal. Splitters, on the other hand, tend to defy the category or classification, concentrating instead on the unique details. As history is often messier than one perceives, it is generally safer to be a splitter rather than a lumper. It is much easier, however, and therefore much more common, to be a lumper.

Calvinism Calvinist? A Neo-Calvinist Engagement of Calvin’s ‘Two Kingdoms’ Doctrine,” 1–12; Steven Wedgworth and Peter Escalante, “John Calvin and the Two Kingdoms—Part 1 and 2,” The Calvinist International, www.calvinistinternational.com/2012/05/29/calvin-2k-1/ (accessed February 3, 2018); www.calvinistinternational.com/2012/05/29/calvin-2k-2/ (accessed February 3, 2018).